

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
SY-05 MCT-02 TRSE-00 COME-00 ACDA-12 /085 W
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R 271431Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1328
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 15455

ALSO FOR SY/CC/TAG

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ASEC, GW
SUBJECT: A NEW POLICE BLUNDER REKINDLES THE TERRORISM
DEBATE

REF: BONN 4966

SUMMARY. A NEW POLICE BLUNDER HAS LED TO A MAJOR PARTISAN
DEBATE ON TERRORISM. INTERIOR MINISTER BAUM AND THE EN-
TIRE INTERNAL SECURITY APPARATUS ARE TAKING POLITICAL
HEAT. THE OPPOSITION SENSES AN ISSUE FOR THE HESSE
ELECTION; THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT IS LABORING TO CALM
DOWN PUBLIC CONCERNS. THE EVENTS OF AUGUST 6 ARE A
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PAINFUL REMINDER OF THE NEURALGIC REACTIONS TO TER-
RORISM, AND THE POLITICAL PRICE THAT OFTEN ACCOMPANIES
POLICE EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH IT. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE TUESDAY, AUG 22, FRG POLITICIANS HAVE DEBATED THE
CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH POLICE FAILED EARLIER THIS
MONTH TO APPREHEND THREE PROMINENT TERRORISTS ---

CHRISTIAN KLAR, WILLY PETER STOLL, AND ADELHEID SCHULZ
--- WHOM THEY HAD BEEN OBSERVING FOR SOME TIME BUT
WHOSE IDENTITIES WERE NOT ESTABLISHED UNTIL THE TRAIL
HAD BEEN LOST. THE THREE BELONG TO THE HARDCORE OF
GERMAN TERRORISM. THEY ARE GENERALLY REGARDED AS CEN-
TRAL FIGURES IN THE 1977 MURDERS OF FEDERAL PROSECUTOR
SIEGFRIED BUBACK, BANKER JUERGEN PONTO, AND INDUSTRIAL-
IST HANNS-MARTIN SCHLEYER.

2. ON LEARNING THAT A WEEKLY MAGAZINE (STERN) AND OTHER
MEDIA WERE ONTO THE STORY OF A MAJOR POLICE
"BLUNDER" IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM, AND HAVING
FAILED TO FIND ANY NEW TRACE OF THE THREE TERRORISTS,
INTERIOR MINISTER GERHART BAUM (FDP) DECIDED A FEW
DAYS AGO TO LAUNCH A NATIONWIDE MANHUNT, AND -- IN
LINE WITH HIS CAMPAIGN TO BRING MORE OPENNESS INTO THE
FRG'S INTERNAL SECURITY APPARATUS -- TO GO PUBLIC.
ACCORDINGLY, BAUM AND HORST HEROLD, PRESIDENT OF THE
FEDERAL CRIMINAL POLICE (BKA), BRIEFED THE PRESS ON
AUGUST 22. BAUM ALSO PROMISED A FULL REPORT TO THE
NATION ONCE ALL THE FACTS ARE IN.

A) ACCORDING TO THE BAUM/HEROLD ACCOUNT, THE TRIO RENTED
HELICOPTERS FOR FLIGHTS IN THE AREA OF SOUTHWEST GERMANY,
WHICH INCLUDES PRISONS WHERE TERRORISTS ARE BEING HELD,
ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS DURING JULY AND EARLY AUGUST. THEY
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POSED AS PHOTO JOURNALISTS AND BORE VIRTUALLY NO RESEM-
BLANCE TO THEIR (OUTDATED) PICTURES ON FRG WANTED
POSTERS. POLICE OFFICIALS, ALERTED TO WHAT SEEMED TO
BE ONLY A MILDLY SUSPICIOUS CASE, INITIALLY OPTED NOT
TO DETAIN THE TRIO FOR POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION, BUT IN-
STEAD TO OBSERVE AND TAIL THEM.

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B) THE POLICE DID NOT ESTABLISH THE IDENTITIES UNTIL
AFTER AUGUST 6, WHEN THE TERRORISTS, IN A CLASSIC MAN-
EUVER OF EVASIVE DRIVING, SHOOK OFF THE CAR WHICH WAS
TAILING THEM. THEY HAVE NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE THAT TIME.

3. IN THEIR BRIEFINGS, BAUM AND HEROLD UNDERSTANDABLY
SHOWED GREAT CHAGRIN OVER THE UNDENIABLE FACT THAT THREE
HARD-CORE TERRORISTS HAD SLIPPED AWAY. THEY ADMITTED
THAT THEY HAD LEARNED OF THIS CASE ONLY AFTER THE IDEN-
TITIES HAD BEEN FIRMLY ESTABLISHED, BUT THEY LABORED TO
REBUT CHARGES THAT THE BKA HAD MADE A MAJOR SLIP-UP OR
-- THE STERN THESIS -- THAT OFFICIALS HAD TRIED TO HIDE
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THIS "SCANDAL" FROM PUBLIC VIEW.

4. STILL, THE BRIEFINGS AND THE STERN ARTICLE (WHICH
APPEARED ON AUGUST 24) HAVE REKINDLED THE LONG-SIMMERING
PARTISAN DEBATE ON TERRORISM IN THIS COUNTRY. IN PARTI-
CULAR, THE HELICOPTER ANGLE HAS RAISED PUBLIC CONCERN
THAT THE TERRORISTS ARE PLANNING A SPECTACULAR AIRBORNE
ASSAULT, PERHAPS AN ATTEMPT TO FREE THEIR JAILED
COMRADES. (FRG SPOKESMEN CLAIM THAT PRECAUTIONS HAVE
BEEN TAKEN TO PREVENT A LANDING OF THIS KIND.)

A) OPPOSITION LEADERS, PARTICULARLY ALFRED DREGGER
(CDU/CSU SPOKESMAN FOR INTERNAL SECURITY), HAVE ATTRIBU-

TED POLICE CLUMSINESS IN THIS CASE IN LARGE PART TO THE RESULTS OF AN INTIMIDATION CAMPAIGN WHICH, THEY CLAIM, LEFTIST GROUPS HAVE LONG WAGED AGAINST FRG SECURITY FORCES, WITH THE TOLERANCE OF THE SPD/FDP COALITION IN BONN. DREGGER, A CANDIDATE WHO NEEDS A WINNING ISSUE FOR THE OCTOBER 8 ELECTION IN HESSE, HAS DEMONSTRATIVELY CALLED FOR A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BUNDESTAG INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE.

B) GOVERNMENT AND SPD SPOKESMEN ARE DOING THEIR BEST TO CALM DOWN PUBLIC FEELINGS. THEY HAVE CALLED FOR A DISPASSIONATE REVIEW OF WHAT HAPPENED, AND THEY HAVE WARNED AGAINST SECOND-GUESSING POLICE WHO, IN THE DAYS BEFORE AUGUST 6, HAD NO CONCLUSIVE REASON TO DETAIN THE TRIO. THE FDP, WHOSE MINISTER IS TAKING THE MAIN POLITICAL HEAT, HAS WAFFLED BY CALLING FOR ANYTHING WHICH WILL SHED MORE LIGHT ON THE CASE.

5. THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT THE OPPOSITION WILL CONTINUE TO MILK THIS CASE FOR POLITICAL CAPITAL.
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ASIDE FROM THE NEEDS OF DREGGER'S CAMPAIGN IN HESSE, THE UNION HAS LONG PORTRAYED ITSELF AS THE PARTY OF LAW AND ORDER, AND THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT AS INADEQUATE TO THE TASK OF STAMPING OUT TERRORISM. IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE WILL DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT BEFORE THE END OF THE SUMMER RECESS ON SEPTEMBER 18. IF IT DOES NOT, THE BUNDESTAG WILL CERTAINLY DEBATE IT -- HEATEDLY -- DURING THE SEPTEMBER 21-22 BUDGET REVIEW.

6. PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE AUGUST 6 EVENTS RECALLS VIVIDLY THE MISTAKES WHICH -- IN RETROSPECT -- PROBABLY PREVENTED FRG POLICE FROM FINDING SCHLEYER WHILE HE WAS STILL ALIVE (REF). THIS CASE ALSO SUPPORTS THE NOTION -- WHICH WAS A MAJOR CONCLUSION IN THE HOECHERL REPORT ON THE SCHLEYER CASE -- THAT THE FRG'S PROBLEM IN CATCHING CLEVER, RUTHLESS TERRORISTS LIES MORE IN PRESENT MACHINERY AND THE PEOPLE WHO RUN IT THAN IN THE ABSENCE OF NEW SPECIFIC LEGISLATION.

7. THIS CASE IS BAUM'S FIRST OBVIOUS MAJOR STUMBLE IN HIS THREE MONTHS AS INTERIOR MINISTER. A BKA OFFICIAL WITH CDU CONNECTIONS, GERD BOEDEN, WHO LEADS THE TERRORISM DIVISION, IS ALSO BEING GIVEN A LARGE SHARE OF THE PUBLIC BLAME. THE EVENTS OF AUGUST 6 ARE THUS A PAINFUL REMINDER TO ALL FRG INTERNAL SECURITY OFFICIALS OF THE NEURALGIC REACTIONS WHICH TERRORISM EVOKES, AND OF THE POLITICAL PRICE WHICH CAN ACCOMPANY POLICE EFFORTS

TO COPE WITH THIS PROBLEM. MEEHAN

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